

Florence Township Council Executive Session 2/12/20

FLORENCE TOWNSHIP COUNCIL EXECUTIVE SESSION

February 12, 2020

8:00PM

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

Council President Sandusky called the meeting to order and led the Salute to the Flag.

SUNSHINE STATEMENT

The Opening Statement was read by the Township Clerk: This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice was posted on the municipal bulletin board on January 15, 2020; published in the Burlington County Times on January 14, 2020; placed on the Township website, and given to the Trenton Times for information on January 12, 2020.

ROLL CALL

Present: Frank Baldorossi, Bruce Garganio, Paul Ostrander, Dave Woolston, Jerry Sandusky

Also present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie, Richard A. Brook, Township Administrator; Thomas A. Sahol, Assistant Township Administrator; Kelly Grant, Esq., Township Attorney; James Biegen; Township Engineer; Stephen Fazekas, Future Township Administrator, Martin J. Eckert, Recreation Director, Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting to the public at this time. Seeing no one wishing to be heard, it was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to close the public comments. Roll call vote – all ayes.

BUSINESS

A. Recreation Director – Program Report

Recreation Director Martin Eckert spoke about 2019 and said it was a good year. The township implemented many programs and offerings benefitting the community and he has received a lot of positive feedback from the residents. He extended his gratitude to the office staff, Command staff, the Police and Fire Departments, EMS and the school district for their collective effort and for making his job easier.

Planning is well underway for 2020 spring and summer activities. Tennis will be returning and he is working with the USTA to expand the program to neighboring communities so the kids can move on to the next step where they can better understand the game. It will be a shared service and if the USTA signs off, the \$50 fee will go away and it will be completely free for all of the children.

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Music in the Parks will be brought back utilizing both Roebling and Wilkie Parks again this year. Local businesses have asked how they can get involved and it is through their sponsorships that we are able to pay for the bands, the sound person, etc. These businesses are supporting the betterment of the community.

The Carnival will again be held in June and many local organizations are already lined up to participate. We are looking forward to a really good event. The Patriotic Celebration will be held on July 11th with a rain date on the 12th. The parade will go through the village of Roebling with Mr. and Mrs. Louis Borbi as the Grand Marshals and the fireworks will be supplied by the same company this year as in the past.

In 2019 a Health and Wellness Initiative was started. We are trying to bring the community together in a positive way and work toward applying to the state for the Healthy Community designation. A few fitness classes were started in the Community Center to include a general fitness class for seniors or anyone who is looking at getting active again, as well as a barre and core class that have all been going really well. Since January 1st an adult and youth yoga class and a Zumba class were added. To date, there have been 350 people that have taken part in these classes and the numbers have been steady with new people coming out each week.

Mr. Eckert spoke about the AEDs that were recently donated. One is mounted in the Community Center and once the spring programs get underway, they will have them in the recreation facilities. The hope is to never have to use them, but it is a good thing that they are there and it was a great gesture by Heart House/Virtua Foundation.

Lastly, Mr. Eckert spoke a little about the fall recreation program fees. Since the fees have been waived, the numbers have spiked. Basketball has close to 300 children registered this year.

B. Township Clerk – Update on River Rock Bar & Grille ABC License

Municipal Clerk Nancy Erlston gave an update on the Liquor License for the River Rock Bar & Grille. She explained that when an owner of a liquor license goes bankrupt, the license is assigned to an attorney and that attorney is supposed to take care of the license until it is sold and transferred to another owner. The attorney's office that held the River Rock license never renewed their 2018/2019 license. When they tried to renew their 2019/2020 license, the ABC said they could not because they hadn't renewed the 2018/2019 license and they were required to seek a special relief through the Division of the ABC to allow them to do so. They had to get the 12.18 relief which is for someone who hasn't timely filed and then they had to file for the 12.39 relief which is for someone who has been inactive for more than 2 licensing terms. Finally, all of the relief has been granted, they have met all of the terms that the ABC requires, they paid all of the fees to both the state and the town, they have advertised, they have done a new 12-page application and the only thing left to do, if the township agrees to do so, is to renew the license for the two terms, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. The ABC stated that it has to be two separate resolutions, so if

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Council is in agreement, next week a resolution will be put on the agenda for approval to get the license current. The license will have to renew again in June for the 2020/2021 term. Council agreed.

C. Township Engineer – Road Program Discussion

Administrator Brook gave an overview of the streets that are going to be done in 2020 including a significant job on Potts Mill Road, which is part of Phase 1 but will be broken out separately. He explained that all of the roads outlined on a map that was handed out to Council have already been bonded and they will be done as part of the 2020 Road Program. There may be a few minor adjustments but they tried to stay within the bond that was already approved by the municipality because of the debt service.

Administrator Brook explained that the 2021 Road Program will be little more concise and smaller. The town has done a significant number of roads over the years. The roads are looked at with respect to their condition, not their location and you can clearly see that they are ready to be repaved. A significant impact has been made over the years by continuing to repave and work on the road program. Not only do you mill and repave roads, sidewalk and curbing are also repaired and replaced as needed. If there are trees that are creating a hazard, that is addressed through the road program as well. Potts Mill Road is a significant undertaking. There will be a total of 3 phases and the town is getting back some grant money for all three phases. Unless something unusual happens in the market, you should be able to stay within the bond ordinance that was already approved.

In 2021 we would move forward to do a bond ordinance and all of these roads were, for the most part, on lists that we had prepared. There may be a few areas where some small sections may not need to be done because we have already done them. In addition, we have what is called public park improvements, which is one of the things we should always do to continue to improve them by creating walking trails, in staying in the health and wellness philosophy. Funding will be put in place to continue to make improvements that benefit everyone and the quality of life in the community in the next few years.

Lastly is Potts Mill Road Phase 3, which is the last phase from Route 130 inward to catch up to where Phase 2 ends. Included in that Phase is a culvert, which Township Engineer Jim Biegen will probably have to bid separately. We were able to acquire a grant in the amount of \$231,500 with the Assistant Administrator's help, which will eventually get put toward the debt service when the town receives the funds.

A few other things that are worth noting, sections of East and West Fifth Streets are ready to be paved. However, removing the rails and putting down a walking/biking path is going to be pretty disruptive to those parts of Fifth Street. It really makes more sense to get that work

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done in 2021 and put it into the next road program so that all of East and West Fifth Street, where it is necessary, will be repaved.

In Roebling, the library parking lot along with the adjacent lot are both ready to be repaved. They may be able to wait until 2022, but it is something that needs to be considered. They are parking lots that are used by a number of residents in the community and they are ready. He recommends giving those some thought and including them in a future road program.

Mayor Wilkie discussed the Tall Pines development and how a decision should be made regarding the extension of water and sewer to the development. He explained that when the high school was being built, water and sewer lines were installed. He showed the area on the map where there is no access to water and sewer. He stated that drainage is so bad that there is an underdrain system going through the road so that it can drain the streets and residents have their sum pumps draining out to it. He explained that the road surface is worn down but that the drainage will have to be considered as well as water and sewer. It is a major project but the roads need to get done some time in the near future. There was an assessment done for residents who lived in the homes where the water and sewer lines ran in front and he recalls the cost to be somewhere around \$15,000 and homeowners were able to pay over a period of 10 years. The majority of residents in that area tied in to the water and sewer lines at that time.

The Mayor asked if Council would like to pursue this. Councilman Garganio stated that it may be worthwhile to communicate with the residents to find out if this is something that they would like to go forward with. They discussed whether or not it should be an option because if the roads are being repaved then that would be the time to tie in to the utilities.

Administrator Brook said that it is clear that the roads need to be repaved and it would make sense to those that do not have public water and sewer to tie in now. The town should reach out to the affected residents and explain that we are looking into the feasibility of extending the utilities and initiate a dialogue with the residents. The township engineer could work up some cost estimates. If the township ultimately decides to extend water and sewer, then utility funds can be utilized and that would include restoration curb to curb.

Township Engineer, Jim Biegen explained that the high-water table affects any new septic systems in the Tall Pines development. The underdrains have to be investigated quite a bit more to see where they outlet to and a lot of it has been compromised by tree roots with a few areas being broken up into pieces. That is having an effect on the high-water table as well.

Administrator Brook further explained that the town is beginning to investigate the need for repaving Tall Pines and would like to schedule the repaving of the roads in the future. The

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cost of the engineering would be factored into the bond ordinance. It is going to be a tough development but the roads are in need of repaving now.

Council agreed that it would be worthwhile to notify and communicate with the residents before moving ahead.

D. Assistant Administrator – Loading Zone Request: Broad Street Dance Studio

Assistant Administrator Tom Sahol explained that the dance studio in the old Johnny's Gym building on Broad Street is having an issue with parent drop off on the side of the building. They are asking for a drop off or loading/unloading zone. He spoke with Command Staff and the best place would be the existing driveway on West Third Street. There could be a 30 foot drop off zone, that would be no parking scheduled on our ordinance, so that the parents can move around the block, drop their children off and continue on versus impacting Broad Street which is a little more heavily travelled. If Council is in agreement, it is an easy ordinance draft to create that type of a zone and then it can be determined whether or not it is a drop off zone or a loading zone.

Councilman Baldorossi asked if pick up would be in the same location and expressed a concern for having too many people picking up at the same time. Tom explained that we could never accommodate that many vehicles in one area, but that would have to be something to be worked out. He explained that there is a similar situation that has been worked out seasonally at the snack shop at Front and Broad Streets.

Council agreed.

E. Open Space Program

Administrator Brook explained that the open space program has been very successful in the community and several properties were able to be acquired over the past 10 years while it has been in effect. It is 1 cent on the tax rate and the funds have been used to preserve several properties in the community. We went out for permanent debt service and, for the most part the amount of money that was borrowed will be offset by the amount of money that is being collected. It is going to be rare at times or insignificant when the town will have to put out additional funds to cover the amount of its expenses. The question now is regarding expansion of the program. There are two aspects to that. Over the years the town has always used the money for acquisition. In order to expand, it has to go to the voters for a referendum, just like the first one back in 2008. Council would have to decide how to phrase the question as well as determine an amount for the increase. If there is a general consensus, then it needs to be decided when to collect the money and how it will be used. For example, acquisition of properties for open space and capital development of the properties and not for general maintenance? General routine maintenance would be part of the municipality's responsibility.

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Councilman Garganio asked what blue acres are? Assistant Administrator Sahol explained that blue acres is land that is acquired because of common flooding. It is done to prevent future problems with water. The Mayor stated that local money was used for blue acres and that open space could not be used because the question was so restrictive in 2008.

The first step in the process is the phrasing of the question so the Township Solicitor can refine it and come back to Council with it. Then, once all are in agreement with the amount, she will craft an ordinance, which will then be adopted and the Township Clerk will work with the county to get the referendum on the ballot in November. It will take several months to do something of this magnitude.

Council agreed to the amount of a \$0.02 tax increase and Township Solicitor Kelly Grant will draft up a question for Council to approve at the next meeting and, if Council is in agreement, then she will proceed with an ordinance for March. If the voters approve it in November, it will take effect next year and run for 20 years. If not approved, there will be no change.

F. Zip Code Consolidation

The Mayor explained that the Burlington post office services everything along Route 130 in Florence Township, along with everything on Cedar Lane to Bustleton Road and Fountain Boulevard. Bordentown services part of Old York Road and the surrounding areas. The Estates and Manors at Crossroads both have a Florence zip code. Even though we have both a Florence and a Roebling post office, all of our mail goes to Bordentown. We do not have a local post office that services us. He is asking for a consensus at the current time and he will meet with the postal services to find out about the process.

He said that in 2008, the post office required that 85% of the residents in this area had to respond with 75% voting yes. It died in February because only 52% responded. The Mayor spoke with the Economic Development Committee and one of the things that was discussed was public information and trying to generate resident's input. He is not asking for approval, just a consensus to pursue and then he would like Council to pass a resolution at some point in order to move forward.

Council President Sandusky asked where all of the mail would go if it were changed? The Mayor explained that the only thing that would change is the Burlington routes would end up being through Bordentown and, if there were enough routes in Florence to give us a post office, maybe we would not have to go to Bordentown to pick up certified mail. Council agreed to pursue the change.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Wilkie mentioned that the PILOT presentation went live on Facebook and the Township website.

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Council member Frank Baldorossi stated that he started walking a few weeks ago at the Roebling Park. He asked to have the shed in the basin repainted and cleaned up because he noticed there is some graffiti in the back.

He also asked about the “Welcome to Roebling” signs. He noticed they are no longer present throughout Roebling. He recommended maybe an Eagle Scout project can be planned to get those back in place. The Mayor mentioned that the Historical Society has been reorganized and perhaps that is something they can work out.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting to the public at this time.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, asked for examples of the impact of the \$.02 rise for tax payers to give them an idea of what the increase would be. Council agreed this is something that can be done.

Mr. Kamienski also asked Administrator Brook about the progress with the animal control company for the township. Administrator Brook explained that it is a topic that will be discussed with the incoming Administrator, Stephen Fazekas because he used the same company in Burlington where he was Administrator. He said that if we can get better service for the community, he is for it, even if that means paying a little more. He is going to meet with the current animal control officer sometime in March and try and resolve the issue that Mr. Kamienski is experiencing with skunks and improving the level of service.

Seeing no one else wishing to be heard, it was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to close the public portion of the meeting. Voice Vote – all ayes.

Administrator Brook stated that there may be an upcoming ordinance to clarify one or two sections of the property rental inspection. A resident brought to our attention that the code does not reflect how we implement our inspections and we want to double check with the Construction Department to refine the code accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to adjourn at 8:56 PM. All ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/jns